

Vaginal Ring

Where can you get the vaginal ring?

The vaginal ring requires a prescription from a qualified health care provider. Call your local family planning clinic for information.

How the vaginal ring works:

The vaginal ring is a small, flexible transparent ring (2 inches across) that you place in your vagina. It releases a steady flow of low dose hormones. Like birth control pills, this combination of hormones stops your body from releasing an egg, so no egg can be fertilized. The hormones also cause the cervical mucus (liquid at the opening of the uterus) to thicken, which can stop sperm from getting into the uterus.

How to use the vaginal ring:

The vaginal ring is a once-a-month method of birth control. You place the vaginal ring in your vagina and it stays there for 3 weeks. It releases a steady flow of hormones. Remove the ring for the fourth week. Your menstrual period will usually start 2-3 days after the ring is removed. A new vaginal ring must be inserted 1 week (7 days) after the last ring was removed to continue to prevent pregnancy. Do not reuse a vaginal ring for a second month.



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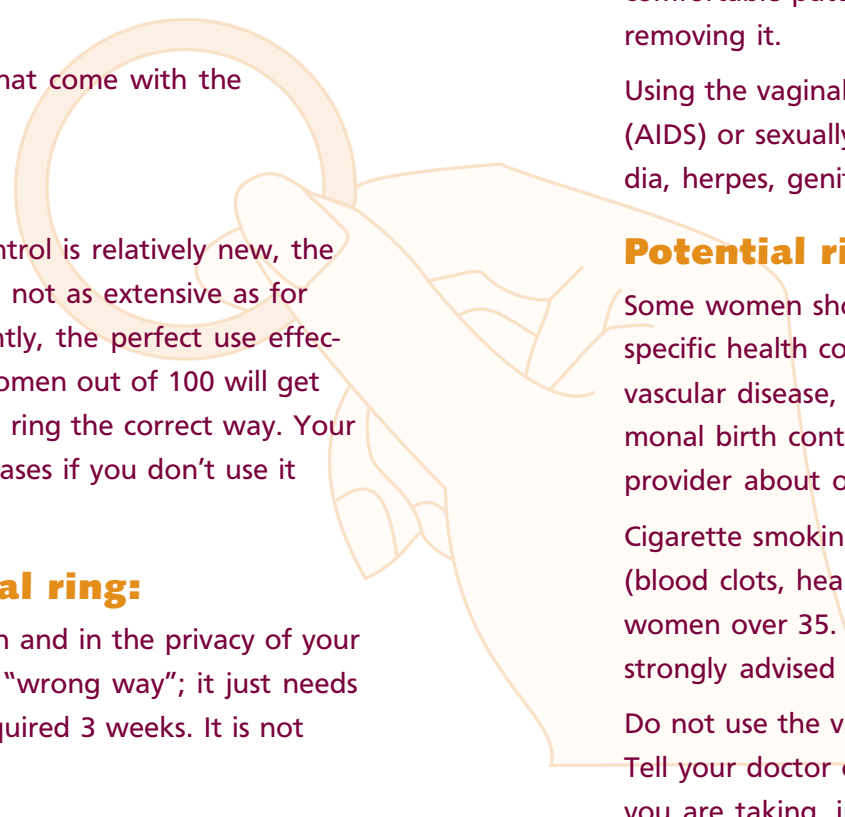
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The exact placement of the ring is not important because it does not work as a barrier method of birth control. There is no danger that the vaginal ring will be pushed up too far in the vagina or “lost.” If your vaginal ring “falls out,” read the instructions or call your health care provider for specific instructions.

Follow the written instructions that come with the vaginal ring.

Effectiveness:

Because this method of birth control is relatively new, the research for effectiveness rates is not as extensive as for other hormonal methods. Currently, the perfect use effectiveness rate is 98%-99%; 1 - 2 women out of 100 will get pregnant when using the vaginal ring the correct way. Your chance of getting pregnant increases if you don't use it correctly or consistently.

Benefits of the vaginal ring:

The ring is inserted once a month and in the privacy of your home. It cannot be inserted the “wrong way”; it just needs to stay in your vagina for the required 3 weeks. It is not made of latex.

Potential side effects and disadvantages:

Some women report vaginal infections and irritation, headaches, weight changes, nausea, irregular vaginal bleeding, abdominal cramps and breast tenderness. You may have

other side effects. Ask your health care provider about other possible side effects.

Some women may be aware that the ring is in their vagina, but you should not feel it once it is in place. You must feel comfortable putting the vaginal ring into your vagina and removing it.

Using the vaginal ring will not give you protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks:

Some women should not use the vaginal ring because of specific health conditions. If a woman has a history of cardiovascular disease, it is recommended that she not use hormonal birth control methods. Ask your doctor or health care provider about other health risks.

Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious cardiovascular (blood clots, heart attack, stroke) side effects, especially for women over 35. Women who use the vaginal ring are strongly advised to not smoke.

Do not use the vaginal ring while you are breast feeding. Tell your doctor or health care provider about any medicines you are taking, including prescriptions, over-the-counter, herbal remedies and vitamins.